

This Defense bill is critically important. It has very important support for our military and their families. It has passed through this Senate before, and we are ready now to make the final trip to the White House, which needs to be done, by the way, by tomorrow. So I hope our colleagues will not continue to delay. I hope they will allow us to move to final passage on this bill so our men and women who are serving us in the military and around the globe know there is a Senate who is working for them.

I have heard some of them on the other side complain that some things were added to the Senate Defense bill—that also need to be done by the end of the year, besides the Defense bill—such as making sure our families, whose benefits are running out for unemployment, or COBRA for health care insurance, get a 2-month extension. So should our Christmas present to them be: Sorry, you aren't going to get your small little help as we end this year. We want to keep that going for another 3 months during one of the worst economic times we have seen. So, of course, we put it in this bill.

Because of the obstruction on the other side, we can't get it through in a timely fashion. It has to be done by the end of this year. We are doing the right thing for our families. We are doing the right thing for our military by putting it in this bill and getting it done and to the President so we can finish our work.

Mr. President, these are all critical issues. We are all tired. We have been here day after day after day. It is time to get this done. Let me tell you why. Because Doreen and her husband are facing piles and piles of paperwork to care for her husband. They are fighting their insurance company. And all we have to do is put these bills in front of us, get them done, and provide some relief for America. I hope that is what we focus on, Mr. President. I hope we stop the deny and delay and obstruction that the Kelseys have had to fight with their insurance company. Let's move these bills and go home to our families for Christmas.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. BURRIS. Mr. President, I also would like to make a few comments on the issue that is pending before this body and which has been debated and debated and debated, discussed and discussed and discussed. It is time to bring it to a meaningful and final conclusion.

As I address this Chamber today, we stand on the cusp of history. For many years, we have known that the American health care system is badly broken. Now, after nearly a century of debate, after 100 years of delay and false starts, this body is on the verge of laying the issue of health reform to a rest.

This bill represents the culmination of decades of hard work. Its course has

been shaped by 11 Presidents and countless Members of the House and Senate. It has taken a long and winding path to reach this point. This legislation is a product of compromise and consensus, of give and take on both sides. It is not perfect; by no means is it perfect. But here we stand.

We have come further than any Congress in history on this issue. We have worked hard to craft a measure that can accomplish the goals of reform without alienating those whose support we need to pass this bill. Without a commitment to certain ideals, this bill would be empty and ineffective. But without a willingness to work together and achieve compromise, this bill can never become a political reality.

As responsible legislators, this is the fine line we must always walk. It is never easy. I applaud my colleagues for the fine work they have done at every step along the way. Still, not everyone is satisfied, so the work goes on. It is the genius of our Founding Fathers and the rules of this body that allow one Senator to keep debate alive so we can work, debate, write, rewrite legislation together. One Senator can do that under the rules of this body.

Some have suggested that we kill this legislation and start over. They suggest that we stop and come up with something new. They say without perfection we should give up on reform altogether.

I have spoken on the Senate floor, Mr. President. You know what my position has been. But giving up on this issue is not an option. So as my colleagues and I continue to move forward from here, I would like to make one thing very clear. After 100 years of debate, we have come too far and worked too hard to turn back now. Too many Americans are counting on us to make a decision on their behalf. They need it now. They don't need it tomorrow or next week or next month or next year or never—they need it now. Killing the bill would ignore those who look to us for help in their time of crisis. We cannot abandon them at this time. Leaving tens of millions of people without any health coverage at all is also unacceptable.

To all those who believe we should kill this bill I would say this: I understand their frustration, the impulse to say enough is enough. But our vote in this body on this bill is not the end of a path for this sweeping legislation, only a door to the next step of conference.

I have not yet seen the details of the legislation. I have not yet seen the CBO score. I have not yet seen the provisions that will earn my vote; namely, cost containment, competition, and accountability. It is only through keeping this legislation alive that we can continue our work to make this a more perfect document. I say we must continue to work on this document we have before us. We cannot kill this legislation and start over. We must keep working through this legislation, keep-

ing it alive so we can continue—continue—to make this document what we want it to be. That is what we must do. I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I speak today about the need for urgent action on the Defense appropriations bill. I shouldn't have to speak about urgent action on the Defense appropriations bill because this is the one area that is so important to the country and on which we should always operate as quickly as we can. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to stop their attempts to derail the health care bill and allow the Defense appropriations bill to move forward.

As always, I respect that my colleagues have different views. We have different views on all kinds of issues. We have all kinds of substantive differences. I am one of the people in this body who believe there are basic differences, and a lot of them are not political, they are about basic differences that separate us from being Democrats and Republicans. We can disagree on tactics and on principles, but I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle support our troops, and the support of our troops should never be a partisan issue.

This bill funds more than \$100 billion for operations, maintenance requirements, and military personnel requirements for our armed action in Afghanistan and Iraq. It provides more than \$23 billion for equipment critical for protecting the brave men and women in uniform—and they are brave men and women and they deserve this. I know the other side of the aisle agrees with that. That is why we should move ahead on this bill. It funds more than \$150 billion for the training of our troops, critical to our success. It is incumbent upon the Congress to ensure that our troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, and throughout the world have the resources they need to be safe, secure, and effective in the war zone.

This bill has been operated and worked on by both parties. It puts our troops first, with the necessary equipment and improved benefits for the military and their families. This isn't just about our troops; this is about the brave men and women who remain at home, the families who need the benefits—again, issues I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle agree with. They deserve our support and they deserve it now.

In addition to providing a 3.4-percent pay increase for our troops, it also improves military health care and research, including for the very important psychological health, which is especially important, given the startling